



Pre-Delegation Packet

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San Salvador, January 2017

Women Leaders Across Borders Delegation to El Salvador

El Salvador is moving through a decisive moment in the consolidation of its democracy. In January 2017 we celebrated twenty-five years since the signing of the Peace Accords. That momentous event calls us to reflect on the role that a popular progressive government has had in reduction of economic and social inequalities, and advancing economic equity, gender equality and democratic participation.

The current government led by President Salvador Sánchez Cerén has made enormous efforts to address the needs and potential of women in particular, and as leaders in all areas of development. We have made great progress in various fields: economic empowerment of women, access to credit, land and housing ownership, reproductive health, vocational training, and formal education, among others. Taking into account that women are 53% of the population, we believe that we still have a long way to go, but the progress made to date under the FMLN administration is historic in our country.

In this context, we invite you to visit our country participating in a delegation that aims to showcase successful projects for the benefit of women and to have a learning exchange to strengthen ties of solidarity and leadership among women across borders. We have designed an interactive program including visits to different programs and projects, sharing their achievements and difficulties. You will have the opportunity to share with women in the government from the Executive, Assembly, national Ministries and provincial level leaders; candidates for different public positions, and of course solidarity with women community leaders who work in the construction of peace and democracy.

In this process we are not alone, we promote solidarity among women in the world and we consider that it is very valuable to strengthen ties of friendship and cooperation among the peoples, for this we hope the assistance of leaders of Latin America and the United States with whom we will reflect on the important role that we play in the political arena.

We will welcome you warmly in El Salvador from Saturday, May 27 through Saturday, June 3. We attach a preliminary itinerary and invite your suggestions for activities you wish us to set up.

With our affection,

 Liduvina Magarín Vice Minister for Salvadorans Abroad	 Vanda Pignato Secretary of Social Inclusion
 Elda Gladis Tobar Executive Director, Salvadoran Institute for Children and Youth	 Lourdes Palacios Sub Secretary for Citizen Participation, Transparency and Anti-Corruption, office of the President of El Salvador

About SHARE

Mission

SHARE strengthens solidarity with and among the Salvadoran people in El Salvador and the United States in the struggle for economic sustainability, justice, and human and civil rights.

Vision

To transform society; SHARE increases the capacity of organized communities and their partners through our model of mutual accompaniment.



Core Values

SHARE's work includes binational projects and programming in El Salvador and the United States that support the following institutional core values:

Women's Empowerment: Provide access to education and opportunities for integrated development to women and girls in order to improve their economic, social and political positions in their communities and organizations

Citizen Participation: Promote active participation in democratic processes, decision-making and advocacy campaigns

Leadership Development: Cultivate the skills of a broader base of people including women and young people so that they can become democratic leaders and empower others

Environmental Sustainability: Advocate and raise awareness about environmental justice, including prevention and responses to climate change

SHARE has engaged thousands of concerned U.S. citizens in immersion experiences to El Salvador and in ongoing advocacy since 1981. SHARE is not a charity organization nor do we sponsor educational tourism.

SHARE staff is available before, during and after travel to individually attend to the needs and questions of each group. While traveling, SHARE will facilitate necessities such as lodging, meals, transportation, and interpretation. The SHARE staff in El Salvador is composed of Salvadorans and individuals who are living and working, long-term, in country and are available to provide an additional knowledge base of the Salvadoran experience as well as coordinating the practicalities of travel in a developing nation. Upon return, SHARE is available to facilitate sustained involvement in Salvadoran accompaniment at the institutional and/or individual level.

Model of Mutual Accompaniment

“There is much that The United States has to offer El Salvador, but there is just as much that El Salvador has to offer the United States. Together, we can develop the approach that will be needed to assure that the economic, social, and political futures of both El Salvador and the United States are humane and progressive.” –Archbishop Oscar Romero



Three proud members of the Mujeres Ganaderas Cooperative

As an organization of international solidarity, SHARE recognizes that it is not our role to enter into communities, identify problems, and define and finance solutions. Instead, it is the people and communities living the cycles of injustice and oppression that need to lead the long-term efforts for structural change. Our role is to support the

empowerment of and walk in solidarity with these communities, organizations, and individuals. This is called mutual accompaniment.

Three Pillars of Accompaniment

- *Physical, Spiritual, and Moral Accompaniment:* Building lasting relationships between communities in El Salvador and the United States by creating opportunities for them to share experiences, joys, and struggles.
- *Advocacy Accompaniment:* Advocating for U.S. policies and supporting Salvadoran advocacy efforts that promote respect for human rights and sustainable solutions to poverty and rural development.
- *Financial Accompaniment:* Supporting communities as they seek sustainable alternatives to poverty and just rural development.

This model of mutual accompaniment along with our core values influences all of our work.

Delegations, sponsored by SHARE, reinforce this model of accompaniment by providing U.S. citizens the opportunity to interact directly with the Salvadoran people. Our goal is not to give you a tour of El Salvador, but to instead offer an environment in which you experience and witness the Salvadoran reality by walking beside Salvadorans as they share with you their vision.

As you prepare for your experience in El Salvador, we encourage you to explore this philosophy and reflect on the different natures of charity and justice. Participation in the delegation is based on the desire to listen and understand problems without seeking to immediately resolve them.

Frequently Asked Pre-Delegation Questions

How much does the *Women Leaders Across Borders* Delegation Cost?

\$1,200 for the program plus airfare. Because we have delegates joining from across the U.S., we ask that the flights are booked by the attendees. Always keep a look out on prices and be sure to book through the actual airlines rather than a broker (i.e. priceline or cheapoair.com). The short delegation is \$800.

Are there scholarships available?

Yes, we can provide a scholarship, you can find the application on our delegation page or by [clicking here](#).

Can you explain the short delegation (May 30th –June 3rd)?

The short delegation is meant to provide working professionals who are in need of attending for a shorter time frame. If you're busy and unable to come for the full duration of the delegation, we still encourage you to join through the short delegation. We will concentrate the main activities on the short delegation.

I have heard that there are high levels of crime in El Salvador, will I be safe?

While researching El Salvador, or speaking about the trip to friends or family, you may have heard that El Salvador is currently experiencing a high level of violence, specifically gang violence. Recent reports indicate that violence and crime, both random and organized, have risen in El Salvador since the signing of the peace accords in 1992. As a matter of fact, El Salvador currently faces some of the highest levels of violence in Latin America. National studies indicate that the root causes of the current situation include extreme poverty related to ten years of neo-liberal economics, lack of programs to support reinsertion into society for people after the war, too many guns, and (in spite of reforms) a still-corrupt judicial system.



Given this context, we take our commitment to safety very seriously. SHARE has taken every precaution to ensure that participants avoid dangerous situations and/or environments. We have the benefit of over 36 years of experience working with Salvadoran communities, and the connections, wisdom and mutual respect that comes along with over a quarter century of accompaniment. We have never had an incident after taking 10,000 delegates. Ultimately, the most important in your safety is your own awareness and adherence to safety issues.

What if I get sick?

We will have access to a doctor to assess if it's a minor illness. In case of a serious illness there are good hospitals that we can refer you to. Remember, it is your choice and we will provide our best advice.

What will be expected of me while in El Salvador?

We invite you to consider supporting women in El Salvador, including their leadership development projects, helping us organize an observer mission on the elections of mayors and congress members on March 4th, 2018 and in the presidential elections in 2019.

Do I have to speak Spanish to go on this delegation?

While it will be very useful, it is not a forced requirement on this delegation. We will have Spanish speakers among to translate throughout the duration of our stay.



Where will we be staying?

You will be staying at one of the hotels or guest houses in San Salvador that we frequently use. The hotel rooms will be shared. There will be drinking water available, as well as wi-fi. We will send you further information on the hotel or guesthouse as the date of the delegation approaches. Please let us know if you have a single room so that we can accommodate for an adjusted cost.

What do I do when I arrive in San Salvador?

There will be someone to meet you at the airport with a placard that says SHARE. It may be a SHARE staff person or a driver for SHARE. This person will take you to the hotel. It most likely will not happen, but in the event we are unable to make it to the airport, just take a taxi.

What if I have travel issues?

We do have your flight numbers and information so will be able to check if your plane is on time. If you have some other major issue such as missing your flight entirely, or the like, you can contact our staff person Claudia Martinez, who speaks both English and Spanish, at 011-503-7241-5408 (from the U.S.), 7241-5408 (from El Salvador), or at grassroots@share-elsalvador.org. For U.S. contact, call (510)848-8487.

How do I stay in contact with family and/or friends while I am in El Salvador?

Our place of stay will have access to the internet and you will be able to reach them via e-mail or direct call.

Will there be designated time to visit tourist attractions?

SHARE is always developing the best tactics for an authentic, immersive experience into the Salvadoran culture. We will visit at least a couple tourist attractions.

How much money will I need?

After your \$1,200 are paid, you won't need a penny more. This price covers transportation (inside the country), room and board, and all the setup costs. You can bring some money for souvenirs.

What about insects?

You can avoid infection with Zika, Chikungunya, and Dengue viruses by using lots of insect repellent with DEET, and wearing long pants or long sleeves. Especially in the countryside, bring bug spray and use it. And use more than usual. But, don't get upset if you get bitten—it is very common.

What about the water?

Don't drink water from the faucet unless it is boiled. Don't gargle in the shower or brush your teeth with sink water. Ask about ice and fruit drinks in restaurants. (Everything from the hotel is fine.) Coffee and tea are generally okay because they are boiled.

We will bring plenty of water but please carry a water bottle with you at all times. Drink LOTS OF WATER and drink extra if you drink coffee or soda to balance them out. You will sweat more than you realize and need to drink far more than normal.

What will the weather conditions be during our travel time?

We will arrive at the beginning of El Salvador's rainy season. However, you can expect fairly warm temperatures as San Salvador has a tropical savanna climate and while we will be there during the "winter" sunscreen and covered, lightweight clothing are highly encouraged.

What should I pack?

**Starred items are absolutely necessary*

Documents

- *Passport, plus a photocopy of the first page of passport
- Money belt or other means of carrying valuables safely

Clothing

Weather will be hot and humid (80-90 degrees and sticky) in most regions of El Salvador. Bring a long-sleeved sweater or light jacket for chilly evenings and overly air-conditioned planes.

For meetings, dress should be neat and clean, but not fancy. Skirts, nice jeans, cotton pants or long shorts and a blouse/shirt are fine.

- *Lightweight skirts, pants, knee length shorts or capris, dresses, shirts, etc. (Cotton is best, jeans are fine, just hot)
- *One nice outfit (for formal interviews, religious services, etc.)
- *Walking shoes
- *Change of underclothes for each day, plus one
- Sturdy Sandals
- Flip Flops (for bedtime, showers, etc.)
- Rain gear (light poncho)
- Sunglasses and sun hat
- Plastic bag for dirty clothes
- Long sleeved shirt or light jacket

Equipment and toiletries

- *Sunscreen
- *Mosquito repellent with DEET (this is especially important for prevention of Zika virus)
- *Cortisone cream or anti-itch cream for bites
- *Personal hygiene products (toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, shampoo)
- *Water bottle
- *PeptoBismol (tablets travel more easily than liquid)
- Bandages/first aid material
- Roll of toilet paper/packets of soft tissue
- Aspirin/Tylenol/your preferred headache reliever
- Anti-malarial and/or other prophylactic medications
- Any other prescription medicine (be sure it is in your name and in the original packaging)
- Three zip-lock bags of various sizes (to keep things dust free and to store soiled items)
- Flashlight
- Hand sanitizer to carry in your purse/pocket/knapsack
- Comb, brush, small mirror, etc.

Optional

- Your favorite munchies—granola, candy bars, raisins, crackers, gum—energy food. (We may

not eat often enough to please all appetites, and we will not stop at any place to purchase them, so be prepared!)

- Lip balm (with sunscreen)
- Comfortable shoulder bag or knapsack
- Spanish dictionary or Spanish phrase sheet
- Leisure reading
- Penknife
- Ear plugs or cotton
- Notebook and journal
- Pens and pencils
- Camera

Additional Advice

Pack light! Multi-functional clothing is best. If you think you can live without it for a week, you probably can.

Use your judgment! Please bring whatever medications you need to keep yourself healthy in an unfamiliar environment. For example, if you know you have a delicate stomach, please bring extra PeptoBismol. If you are lactose intolerant, please bring extra medication that addresses this issue.

Be sure to pack two changes of clothes, important documents, medicine, toiletries, and your camera in a carry-on bag! Suitcases have been known to be lost en route.

Please plan ahead and double check! We prefer not to dedicate delegation time to shopping for things that you can bring with you. That said, forgotten essentials (sunscreen, insect repellent, batteries, etc.) are readily available, though more expensive in El Salvador.

Do I need to get any shots or immunizations?

Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. The following information is taken from the Center for Disease Control website:

Recommended immunizations

Update diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), varicella (chickenpox), polio vaccines, and your yearly flu shot as appropriate to age and date of last dose Hepatitis A and Typhoid vaccines are strongly recommended.

Suggested/optional immunizations

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever is not present in El Salvador; however, a certificate of vaccination against yellow fever is required for persons over six months of age coming from infected areas. The U.S. is not an infected area.

Cholera: Cholera is present in this country. Cholera vaccine is not required or recommended according to international health regulations (WHO) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cholera vaccine provides incomplete protection. Strict adherence to food and water precautions lowers risk.

Special advisories

Hepatitis B virus is common among inhabitants of El Salvador. The virus is transmitted from person to person through blood contaminated needles or sexual contact. Vaccination is recommended for persons providing health care and those who plan extended residence in the area.

There have been outbreaks of Zika, Dengue Fever and Chikungunya, all mosquito-borne viruses. There are no immunizations except to protect against mosquito bites with long sleeves and mosquito spray with DEET.

For further information contact the Center for Disease Control at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/camerica.htm>

El Salvador: Past and Present

El Salvador History: Overview

Originally populated by the Pipil and Lenca Indians, El Salvador was colonized by the Spanish over five hundred years ago. In the centuries that followed, a small land-owning elite held control of the country while the large majority of peasants, or campesinos, worked in deplorable conditions to harvest the major national crops of indigo, coffee and sugarcane. In 1932, a group of indigenous peasants revolted in a quest to gain the right to own land and were brutally massacred by the new military-run government, which almost completely wiped out indigenous culture. In the 1970's, rural peasants, labor unions, teachers, and student groups began to organize once again to demand their rights through regime after regime of military governments. The violent



oppression that followed led to a twelve-year civil war from 1980-1992 between the FMLN guerrilla forces and the Salvadoran military, which the U.S. supported with an average of a million dollars a day over the course of the war. During the civil war, over 75,000 Salvadorans lost their lives.

After the signing of the peace accords in 1992, the FMLN was transformed into a political party and the former security forces were dissolved, and a new National Civilian Police force created. Thousands of refugees returned to their homes or to newly populated communities to begin to rebuild their lives. For twenty years, the far right-wing party ARENA ran the country, creating neo-liberal policies that negatively impacted the majority of the Salvadoran population. Immigration to the United States increased with an estimated three million Salvadorans living in the United States to date; in 1990 there were only half a million.

Gang violence also increased as large numbers of Salvadoran immigrants who had fled during the war joined the Los Angeles gangs, the 18th Street and MS-13. With change in U.S. deportation law, many gang members were deported back to post-war El Salvador where they spread their gangs and territories. Now they have established a whole network involved in violent and criminal activity. Government response to the gang violence was a harsh crackdown on Salvadoran youth, especially those living in poor urban communities. A gang truce was signed in early 2012, dropping the levels of violence but then dissolved in early 2014. In August of 2014, the gangs reinstated the second phase of the gang truce, promising to reduce threats and violence.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) signed with the United States in 2005 opened the door for U.S. companies to flood the Salvadoran market with less expensive goods, increasing the agricultural crisis and deepening rural poverty.

Intense environmental degradation began with the deforestation of El Salvador under Spanish rule and continues today, particularly through contamination by foreign transnationals, including mining companies. Community resistance to mining has met with violence, particularly in the rural department of Cabañas.

Working for women's rights and empowerment also continues to be a challenge. The Salvadoran women's movement won a major victory on November 25th, 2010 with the unanimous passage of the Law for a Life Free of Violence Against Women.



Despite many challenges, Salvadorans "siguen adelante" or continue forward with great dedication and hope. In 2009, Mauricio Funes took office to become the first leftist president of El Salvador. The peaceful transition of power in 2009 was huge for Salvadoran society, as one of the contributing factors to the war was that people could not create change through elections due to blatant fraud. Since the 1992 Peace Accords, elections have only become increasingly transparent and democratic, through numerous reforms, and in part with presence from national and international observers. This was seen as a great achievement for the Salvadoran people, but the struggle for justice continues on, as not everything can be changed with a new party in office. Funes implemented a number of social reforms, designed to combat inequality. Such programs include abolishing public healthcare fees, the Ciudad Mujer program (providing services to women), and distributing property titles to many families.

Again in 2014, the left won the presidency after a run-off election with former guerrilla commander Salvador Sánchez Cerén as president. He attributes his search for social justice and improving communities to his humble roots. He was a primary school teacher for ten years. During the war, he was appointed to the position of a Commander in the FMLN. Since the Peace Accords, he has worked the formal political sphere, and was sworn in as Vice-President in 2009. Sánchez Cerén has stated that the "three pillars" of his administration are employment, security, and education. Among his proposals for increasing employment include sponsoring a public development bank and the promotion of important industries. He also proposes to increase funding for police technologies, as well as promote anti-drug abuse campaigns, and training community peace officers. He has expressed his desire for alternative development models (such as those seen in left-wing governments in South America). His Vice-President is Oscar Ortiz, the exceedingly popular former mayor of Santa Tecla.

The spirits of civil war martyrs Oscar Romero, the four churchwomen, and the UCA Jesuits and countless others live on through the Salvadoran people as they struggle for a more just world.

El Salvador History: In More Depth

Poverty and structural injustice in El Salvador is perhaps best understood in the context of the testimonies of those who lived and died in their fight for justice. That fight grew out of faith communities over 25 years ago. During the 1970s many in the Catholic Church made important changes in their commitment to the poor. Progressive priests began to follow the lead of the 1968 Latin American Bishops' Council in Medellín, Colombia, in which the Bishops stated that their pastoral work and accompaniment would begin to take a "preferential option for the poor." In El Salvador, Christians began to form "Ecclesial Base Communities" to study the Bible and reflect on their own reality. Through this process of reading, reflecting, acting, and evaluating, thousands of poor farmers who had been oppressed for years began to find hope in the Gospel's message. The Christian Base Communities would lead the way in the struggle for social and economic justice and for the creation of God's Kingdom on earth.

During the 1970s, El Salvador still had a near feudal land system. Just 2% of the country's population controlled 60% of the arable land. The economy was based on exporting cotton, sugarcane and coffee grown on the very best land. The poor were relegated to growing corn on hillsides, or were given small plots of land on the *haciendas* where they worked cash crops. At the end of each harvest they were required to give a portion of their crop to the landowner. The gross injustices produced by this system created a tension that led to civil war.

Before and during the civil war, which lasted from 1980 to 1992, terror reigned, as death squads tortured and killed those who spoke out for justice. A strong actor in the struggle for dignity was Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was known as the "voice of the voiceless" in El Salvador. Although he began his position with some reservations, he quickly became aware of the pain and suffering of God's people. He began to speak out against the repression, calling for an end to U.S. military aid to El Salvador. These efforts earned him the love of the people and the hatred of the military. On Sunday, March 23, 1980, Romero declared the following in his homily:



"Brothers, you are killing your own brothers. It is high time you obeyed your consciences rather than sinful orders. The church cannot remain silent before such an abomination...In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cry rises to heaven more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you: stop the repression!"

On Monday, March 24, 1980, a professional assassin from the death squads shot Archbishop Romero as he prepared to celebrate the Eucharist. Before his death, Romero said that if he was killed, he would be resurrected in the Salvadoran people. He was right. His life has become a symbol of hope for social justice amongst the poor in El Salvador, and for those in solidarity with the poor all over the world.

Four churchwomen from the United States were also martyred in this campaign of terror. Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan supported efforts to assist internal refugees in 1980. The four were raped and killed by government forces who had labeled them as subversives. These martyrs have never been forgotten among those who work for social justice in El Salvador and beyond. In 2015, the thirty-fifth anniversary of their deaths provides us all with an opportunity to consider their message in the context of today. Their sacrifice calls us to keep our eyes open to the injustices in the world around us and to live as servants to the poorest of the poor.

January 16, 2015 marked the 27-year anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords, which brought an end to the armed conflict and initiated important changes in the Salvadoran government and society. The Peace Accords allowed opposition parties to participate openly in the political process and purported to demobilize the repressive state security forces and death squads, creating a new civilian police force. However, the Peace Accords in practice have done little to address the economic roots that led to the war. Socio-economic components of the Peace Accords such as the redistribution of land, the provision of credit and technical assistance to small farmers and business, increases in social spending, and the elimination of monopolies remain unfulfilled.

During twenty years with the ARENA party at the head of the government from 1989 to 2009, the state focused on implementing neoliberal economic policies: privatizing publicly owned industries and promoting investment of foreign companies, through such incentives as lowering tariffs on imports. The government turned all focus away from the agricultural sector, looking instead to the financial, industrial, and commerce sectors, and making efforts to bring in maquilas, or foreign-owned factories.

Today, El Salvador is still marked by inequities that inspired Christians of good faith like Oscar Romero, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan to struggle for justice three decades ago. SHARE works with our partners to develop strategies that address structural issues and to formulate solutions that are long term and sustainable. Following the example of Romero and the four US Churchwomen, SHARE works to give voice to those who are marginalized in El Salvador so that they can create their own answers to poverty and underdevelopment. With this background, we use the following pages to present the current political and economic context of El Salvador.

Politics in El Salvador

Like many aspects of Salvadoran society, deep polarization characterizes Salvadoran politics, with the right wing ARENA party and left-wing FMLN dominating the political scene. Various other political parties participate in elections and hold seats in the Legislative Assembly, but none have close to the same weight or representation as ARENA and the FMLN. However, most of the smaller parties are right wing or center right and vote with ARENA. Until recently, these parties included the National Conciliation Party (PCN) and the Christian Democrat Party (PDC)—two of the oldest right wing parties. According to El Salvador's constitution, political parties must garner at least 3% of electoral votes to continue as officially recognized parties. Neither the PDC nor PCN obtained 3%



of the vote in the 2004 presidential elections, but a law the Legislative Assembly passed subsequently waived this requirement, allowing these parties to survive. However, on April 29, 2011, El Salvador's Supreme Court declared that law unconstitutional. If the PCN and PDC want to run in the 2012 election of mayor and legislative representatives, they will have to re-register by gathering 50,000 votes.

The ARENA party first won the presidency in 1989 and maintained a tight grip on all three branches of the government for the following 20 years. Roberto D'Aubisson founded both the ARENA political party and the Death Squad apparatus which was responsible for much of the repression of the 1980's. The United Nations Truth Commission found him to be responsible, among other atrocities, for the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero. It is important to note that ARENA promotes the interests of the wealthy in El Salvador, many of whom play active roles within the party. In recent years internal conflict has weakened the hold of the ARENA party. In 2009 a new right-wing party, GANA, split off from ARENA and currently has the most pull of the smaller parties.



Transitioning from guerrilla group to political party after the signing of the Peace Accords, the FMLN quickly proved itself to be the main opposition party in the 1994 elections. This party is recognized as historically representing the values and needs of El Salvador's poor majority, but has had trouble maintaining its traditional base. The FMLN has fared better in each consecutive election since 1994 especially in the legislative assembly where it currently holds the most seats of any party. However, ARENA still manages to push through most legislation it desires because of its alliances with other right wing parties. In 2009, the FMLN won the presidential elections for the first time.



An atmosphere of hope, uncertainty and tension led up to the 2009 elections. Analysts discussed possible unrest stemming from either possible result of the election. The underhanded nature of the 2004 campaign added to apprehension. The FMLN's nomination of Funes as presidential candidate for the 2009 elections marked a break with FMLN tradition as he is not of the party's historical leadership. However, he was a well-respected, popular progressive journalist known for asking tough questions, and came

to be a sign of hope for many sectors of Salvadoran civil society that yearn for alternatives to poverty, immigration and civilian insecurity. ARENA seemed to scramble for a candidate that could compete with Funes. While ARENA poured nearly fourteen times the amount of money into their presidential campaign as the FMLN, Funes still managed to come in ahead of ARENA candidate Rodrigo Avila by just over 2%.

Entering the presidency, Funes faced a government with very little money and high levels of corruption and debt, an international economic crisis, soaring levels of violence and crime, high levels of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and a recent natural disaster. Right wing parties also continued to hold an edge in the Legislative Assembly. A couple of months after he took office, the military coup in Honduras removed president Manuel Zelaya from office, after Zelaya made changes such as significantly raising the minimum wage. This posed the very real question of just how much Funes could truly change without facing a coup himself.

Some Salvadorans were bitterly disappointed that Funes did not make any sweeping systemic changes, while others saw Funes' election and administration as one step in an ongoing journey. Funes took a number of new actions that seemed small in the grand scheme of things, but were nevertheless significant, and were actions that past governments would not have taken. Funes made various measures to clear out corruption within the government. He officially apologized for the government's role in the deaths and disappearances of so many people during the war, and awarded the six Jesuit martyrs medals of honor. His administration also decreed the provision of school uniforms and school supplies for students in grades one to nine and have hired local sewing cooperatives and businesses to make the uniforms. The Funes administration eliminated the fees Salvadorans had to pay at public hospitals as well.

Despite past right-wing warnings that relations between El Salvador and the U.S. would dissolve if a left-wing government was elected, the relationship between the Salvadoran government and the U.S. government remains as close as ever. President Barak Obama visited El Salvador in March 2011. During his visit, he announced \$200 million for a new Central American Citizen's Security Partnership, which seems to be a Central American version of the Merida Initiative in Mexico, which has failed to curb drug cartels and has led to more than 35,000 deaths since 2006. President Obama also visited the tomb of Archbishop Romero, leading to mixed responses. One right wing politician claimed that President Obama should also visit the tomb of Roberto D'Aubuisson. On the left, some hailed the visit as the most important moment during Obama's Latin America tour, while others found the visit hollow without an accompanying acknowledgement of the U.S. role in Archbishop Romero's murder and in the structure of repression during the armed conflict. The Romero Coalition, one of SHARE's partner organizations, issued a statement of their outrage that Obama would visit Archbishop Romero's tomb while the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq rage on, Guantanamo remains open, and the U.S. enters into the conflict in Libya as well.



In 2014, the left again won the presidency after a run-off election with former guerrilla commander Salvador Sánchez Cerén as president. He attributes his search for social justice and improving communities to his humble roots. He was a primary school teacher for ten years. During the war, he was appointed to the position of a Commander in the FMLN. Since the Peace Accords, he has worked the formal political sphere, and was sworn in as Vice-President in 2009. Sánchez Cerén has stated that the "three pillars" of his administration are employment, security, and education. Among his proposals for increasing employment include sponsoring a public development bank and the promotion of important industries. He also proposes to increase funding for police technologies, as well as promote anti-drug abuse campaigns, and training community peace officers. He has expressed his desire for alternative development models (such as those seen in left-wing governments in South America). His Vice-President is Oscar Ortiz, the exceedingly popular former mayor of Santa Tecla.

Economic and Social Realities in El Salvador

To talk about economics in El Salvador today is to talk of contradictions. Certain macro-economic indicators seem to show that the nation is prospering, but the majority of the population still lives in poverty. A 2008 UN Development Project report found that while unemployment in El Salvador is relatively low, only 20% of Salvadorans earn a decent wage. Some people call this rising poverty the “economic bullets” that kill Salvadorans today as opposed to the physical bullets, which used to kill them during the war. Of course it is harder to recognize these bullets, but people are dying just the same as a result of hunger, lack of employment, and desperation.

El Salvador is considered a poster child of “neo-liberal economics.” In theory, neo-liberal economic policies are meant to increase overall national wealth by increased foreign investment, increased flexibility of the labor market, a transition from state to private ownership, and a shift in the role of the state away from being a provider of basic services. In the Central American context, these practices sometimes increase the Gross Domestic Product of nations, and almost always exacerbate the huge disparities between the rich and the poor, as has been the case in El Salvador. Other common critiques of neoliberal policies include a lack of accountability of private sector actors, and disregard for environmental limits and quality of life indicators, which is clearly reflected in the current struggle against mining (read more below).

Over the past three decades these economic policies have been sponsored by the U.S. government as well as international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A deep frustration with the neoliberal model has been the ability as well as tendency of the U.S. and other wealthy nations along with transnational corporations and International Financial Institutions like the IMF to determine the terms of trade and set policy in countries like El Salvador. In her book, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God*, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda notes that “many Central Americans identify two phases of colonialism: the era in which United States hegemony was maintained through support for military-oligarchy regimes; and the era, beginning in the early 1980s, of control through neoliberal economic policy.” (p. 25)

Circumstances that Affect People’s Livelihoods

The changing dynamic of the rural economy

Poverty in El Salvador is particularly concentrated in the rural sector. Three interconnected problems confront rural dwellers today: The first is a major change in the dynamic of rural economies. From 1980 to 2000, rural employment in non-farming activities rose from 39% to 53% and is now a larger portion of the economy than farming activity. In this dramatic shift, agricultural exports generated only 8% of dollars entering the economy in 2008 contrasted by 80% in 1978. At the same time, the real wages of agricultural workers has dropped to 40% of their 1980 levels. This change has a lot to do with a lack of access to land and the increased flexibility of the labor market. Unfortunately, most people in rural areas do not have the education to be upwardly mobile and



are left with the option of working in the *maquiladoras* or sweatshops, migrating, or remaining unemployed without livelihoods.

Remittances and migration

While migration began in large waves in the 1980s due to the war, levels of migration continued to swell during the 1990s and 2000s because of the difficult economic situation. Currently a third of Salvadorans live abroad, with 90% live in the United States. As a result, remittances, or money Salvadorans in the U.S. and other countries send back to their families in El Salvador, have become a key element keeping the Salvadoran economy afloat. While remittances made up only of the dollars entering El Salvador from other countries 8% in 1978, by 2007, remittances made up 60% of dollars entering the country and 18% of the GDP. These numbers have fallen slightly in recent years, due to the world economic crisis and recession – showing the precarious nature of having an economy so dependent on dollars sent back from other countries. Nevertheless, remittances remain a pillar of the Salvadoran economy, leaving some to declare that El Salvador's major export is its people.

The unstable situation that remittances create constitutes a second aspect that puts additional pressure on Salvadoran families. To send remittances to their families, one member will cross (often without documents) into the United States to work. This is a perilous journey that many never complete alive. The ensuing situation is extremely hard, both for the individual who leaves and for the family left behind. Many Salvadoran children have a parent or both parents in the U.S. and grow up living with extended family members. Ironically, remittances are what give El Salvador a somewhat gilded appearance of wealth. Remittances may be providing a measure of material wealth for people right now, but they are not a sustainable foundation on which to build a society.

CAFTA

Another major challenge facing Salvadorans today is the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). A series of bilateral agreements with five nations in Central America, CAFTA was passed in El Salvador in December 2004 and in the United States in July 2005. Several specific aspects of CAFTA alarm SHARE's sisters and brothers in El Salvador. CAFTA, like most free trade agreements, makes it illegal for governments to charge a higher tax to foreign companies than it does to domestic companies. While this may encourage more foreign investment, it also lowers the revenue of the national government, which leads to a decrease in social spending. The absence of taxes also means that prices on goods produced in the United States will no longer be higher than those produced in El Salvador. Therefore, farmers in El Salvador will be competing on the same playing field with farmers from the United States. However, land ownership, access to credit, and subsidies give some large U.S. Agro Corporations major advantages over Salvadoran farmers. So *although prices may be equal, the competition is very unequal.*

CAFTA also diminishes the ability of the state to improve the lives of its citizens by making privatization of various services obligatory. This can have devastating effects on the poor because some basic services are left to unpredictable shifts in market prices, and can become financially unfeasible for the very poor. Since 1999, telecommunications, the distribution of electricity, and

public pensions have all been privatized in El Salvador. The Saca administration also tried to promote a program of “decentralization” of water services, but this was seen as a thinly veiled attempt to privatize the vital liquid, and was met by strong protests from civil society.

Additionally, the “national treatment” provision of CAFTA prohibits governments from discriminating between foreign investors. Thus the human rights and labor standings of a company’s project in another country may have no bearing on a government’s decision of which company to contract. Moreover, *governments must not enact laws to protect natural resources, favor small local businesses, exact different levels of taxation on foreign and domestic companies, or pass laws requiring companies to use a certain percentage of domestic materials in their production.* Such laws help promote local development by ensuring that local resources and labor will be utilized, and local suppliers and manufacturing production will grow. Instead, this provision enables corporations to import materials, capitalize on cheap local labor for assembly, and export the products once again. Thus, *the only gains countries such as El Salvador receive are minimum wage jobs.*

Furthermore, *this provision allows corporations to sue governments for passing laws that protect natural resources.* In December 2008, the U.S. branch of the Canadian mining company Pacific Rim used these provisions in CAFTA to lodge a statement of intent to sue the Salvadoran government for not allowing the company to carry out a proposed mining project. On March 16, 2009, U.S. mining company Commerce Group followed suit and also sued the Salvadoran government. While the Pacific Rim case is still in process, the World Trade Organization court threw out Commerce Group’s case in March 2011—a moment to celebrate.

These among other aspects of CAFTA make it threatening to the poor of Central America. SHARE continues to monitor the trade agreement as it unfolds.

Circumstances that Demonstrate the Vulnerability of the Marginalized

Environmental degradation and “natural” disasters

Throughout El Salvador, environmental degradation is an enormous problem. Deforestation, contaminated rivers, unwieldy garbage problems, industrial pollution and heavy use of pesticides by small and large farmers alike are just a few of the things that put the delicate eco-system at risk. Only 2% of El Salvador’s virgin forests are left, and the UNDP has declared it the second most deforested nation in the world. In addition, mismanagement of hydroelectric dams further exacerbates issues of flooding in river basins all over El Salvador. With most of El Salvador’s poorest citizens living in rural areas, their dependence on the environment for livelihood makes them the most vulnerable to the costs of environmental degradation.



In November of 2009, this vulnerability was demonstrated when Hurricane Ida dumped half as much rain as Hurricane Stan dumped in a whole week in just a few short hours in the middle of the night. The disaster began with the hurricane, but when paired with already saturated land and erosion caused by deforestation, led to countless mudslides

and flooding, especially in marginalized communities. These mudslides and flooding resulted in over 130 deaths and the destruction of more than 7,000 homes. In the following days over 15,000 people took refuge in temporary shelters. Natural disasters like Hurricanes Mitch in 1998, Stan in 2005 and Ida in 2009, and the earthquakes in 2001, have demonstrated the real disaster: for many years the Salvadoran government and the global economy have shunned the poor.

The Plan for Prosperity

In March of 2015 Vice-President Biden traveled to Central America to meet with leaders of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador to “discuss steps to stimulate economic growth, reduce inequality, promote educational opportunities, target criminal networks responsible for human trafficking, and help create governance and institutions that are transparent and accountable.” While this plan sounds appealing, it will not benefit the families that have been decimated by internal rural to urban migration and the lack of employment in cities that then causes family members of all ages, including small children, to begin the long and extremely dangerous journey to the North.



First, the Plan for Prosperity does nothing about land reform, one of the keys to true prosperity for these largely agricultural countries. A plan designed to strengthen weakened economies that are so dependent on agriculture needs to include provisions for greater ownership of the land by the people who work the land. Yet, ensuring more citizens in the region have land of their own on which to farm and make a living would take away from the extractive industries—industries from countries like the United States, Canada and China, for example—and their domination of this region. People are literally dying to save their land from extractive industries that are displacing families and stealing the natural resources that belong to the people of these countries.

Second, the Plan for Prosperity will only increase the violence in this region and benefit U.S. defense contractors. The plan calls to increase the number of police, while also militarizing them, with the latest gear from U.S. defense contractors. Increasing the number of police when there is already unrest over corruption and the police may continue to be used to protect the powerful interests—interests which are fused between Latin American elites and U.S. economic and military interests—at the expense of the millions who are forced to live under the greatest threat of violence: extreme poverty.

While this plan proposes a number of steps to reign in corruption in the countries that make up the region, it is unlikely that some of the very leaders who are committing corruption are going to stop the same actions that have benefitted and kept them affluent and in power. The real hope against corruption lies in the voices of the people.

Mining and Water Rights

Another threat to El Salvador's fragile environment and to the health of thousands of its people is the powerful mining industry. In 2005, various mining companies from the US, Canada and Australia secured mining licenses to explore for precious metals such as gold, silver, and copper throughout the northern region of the country. Community members living in these areas assert that mining will jeopardize their long-term economic and social situation, as resulting environmental degradation would make cropland and water sources unusable. Employment that would be produced by mining would be temporary—lasting only for the duration of the mining project.

The government of El Salvador was sued in a World Bank tribunal for not allowing Canadian/Australian mining company, PacificRim/OceanaGold to operate in El Salvador. The company filed the case on the grounds that El Salvador acted against the free market agreements between North and Central America.

OceanaGold identifies northern El Salvador as a lucrative gold production site. However, the Salvadoran government denied their request for permits in



recognition of the environmental, health, and social implications of gold mining. If the company had won, the government would have been forced to either allow OceanaGold to mine or to pay the company a fine amounting in hundreds of millions of dollars. Thankfully, on October 14, 2016, OceanaGold was ordered to reimburse El Salvador for their \$8 million in legal costs defending the suit. Yet, there is still no law banning or regulating mining and the threat of environmental and societal impacts remains. Neighboring Honduras allows mining extraction, which has since left the rivers toxic, complicating access to clean water sources, and introducing hundreds of cases of skin disease. National borders don't keep polluted waters from flowing in to the next country. Mining in Honduras (not to mention if mining begins in the northern region of El Salvador), has provoked great concern over cyanide entering the Lempa River watershed. This particular watershed provides over half the Salvadoran population with water for cooking, cleaning, washing, and drinking, including the majority of the population in San Salvador.

There are also social implications attributed to mining in Honduras. The mining issue pits family members and neighbors against each other. On one side, there are those whose livelihoods depend on the jobs provided by the mining industry. However, there are others raising awareness of the environmental and health repercussions caused by mining exploitation. This same issue already burdens Salvadoran society.

Poverty

The majority of poor Salvadorans today still do not have adequate houses, the proper tools to farm, or access to dignified jobs. One of the strongest signals of injustice is that people who work very, very hard, cannot get ahead! Here people work from sun up to sun down—but salaries are not enough to get by, much less save up for a rainy day. In El Salvador you will pass through urban and rural slums. Poverty is vivid—people living in shacks made of tin, cardboard, and sticks. You may see dirty drinking water, children with distended stomachs from disease, and hunger in many faces. But you will also see incredible mansions, imported cars, US restaurants, and stores. This provides ample material for reflection. *Why do a small minority have a lot of material wealth, while the overwhelming majority live in poverty?*

Circumstances that Threaten Human Rights

Although the Peace Accords sought to remedy the disregard for human rights before and during the civil war, the state of Human Rights in El Salvador has been steadily deteriorating in recent years. This has been exemplified by the increase in politically motivated violence and intimidation, and a lack of transparency and institutionalism within the National Civil Police and the judicial system. These conditions have resulted in impunity for many crimes. US intervention in Salvadoran political and security policies has also been on the rise. These factors taken alongside institutional manipulation of Anti-Terrorism legislation to repress social protest make for a worrisome human rights panorama.

With roughly 30 homicides each day, almost four times as many people are dying per day in El Salvador as during the war years. Robbery and non-violent crime are also increasing. Under President Tony Saca, the government responded by creating the Anti-Maras (gang) Act, or the "Supermanodura" (hard handed) laws as they are often called. These laws gave more freedom to the police to make arrests on suspicion rather than probable cause. They also allowed fines for anyone found who does not have their identification on them or youth who happen to be in groups of five or more. In addition, they allow children to be tried as adults. The political weight that these laws hold is affecting the ability of judges to act independently of influential politicians. Many of these laws not only violate provisions made in the Salvadoran Constitution, but also break international treaties that were made during the peace accords through the United Nations.

The enforcement of these laws has resulted in a prison crisis, and there is no more room to put all of the prisoners. This situation has been exacerbated by the deportation of many Salvadoran American gang members to El Salvador by the U.S. authorities. The combination of a generation of youth who have grown up in a war torn country and the failure of the Salvadoran government to create economic opportunity for impoverished youth has created a monster, but the government is fighting back with laws that set a precedent of disrespect for the constitution and international law.

Some reactions to this social violence have fostered more violence. Since 2005 many institutions, including the University of Central America (UCA), FESPAD (an NGO which monitors legal rights in El Salvador), the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador have publicly stated their suspicion of the existence of "social cleansing" or "extermination" groups that operate similarly to the way the death squads did during the civil war. These groups target marginal populations such as sex workers and gang members, sometimes torturing and murdering them.

Despite such a sad history throughout the civil war, politically motivated crime has not stopped in El Salvador. Many deaths occur each month that seem to have a political flavor to them, and these crimes often go without sufficient investigation.

An appalling example of politically motivated repression in recent years came directly from the National Civil Police on July 2, 2007 in the context of a protest in Suchitoto, El Salvador against the Saca Administration's plan to decentralize the water system. Thirteen protesters and community members were arrested and charged with acts of terrorism for being involved in the largely peaceful protest. Four of those arrested, all members of CRIPDES (Association of Rural Communities for Development in El Salvador) were not even at the protest, but merely driving on a highway nearby. The "Suchitoto 13" were held in jail for a month before being let out on bond. Initially they still faced up to 40-60 year in jail if convicted under the Anti-Terrorism legislation passed in November 2006. However, after more than eight months of investigation, and strong domestic and international pressure, charges were dropped in February 2008.

In early summer of 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that plans were underway to create an International Law Enforcement Agency (ILEA) in El Salvador. In the past, many such agencies have been established in geographic areas where US intervention has had a much lower profile. They provide training for police officers as well as other judicial officials. The US State Department has attempted to establish an ILEA in Panama and in Costa Rica in recent years, but both of these efforts failed. After learning of the proposed agency in El Salvador, a coalition of Salvadoran activists and organizations rallied outside the national assembly and officially proposed that National Assembly overturn the law that allows the ILEA to be there, but on July 25, 2005 trainings began without authorizations from the National Assembly.

Signs of Hope

With the disheartening panorama, it is easy to get frustrated. But El Salvador's people and those who care around the world continue to be at the forefront of a grassroots movement that is capable of moving mountains!

Emerging civil society

One thing that builds democracy is a variety of arenas from which differing opinions can be expressed. Examples in the United States are clubs like social justice committees, political action groups, the Rotary Club, and even student governments. Also, movements like the women's or civil rights movements and labor organizing have asked for more inclusion on political discourse,

challenging how many nations have conceptualized democracy. These arenas help to build civil society by fostering leadership, and a diversity of viewpoints. There are several facets of civil society being created in El Salvador today.

At the most grassroots level, organizations like CRIPDES, one of SHARE's primary counterparts, is a nationally and internationally recognized grassroots organization with a base of approximately 300 rural communities in El Salvador, which works to support community, regional and national organization for policies, practices, and resources which promote increased access to development, basic services, employment, and improved living conditions for inhabitants of El Salvador's countryside. As one example, CRIPDES has been especially active in the National Coalition Against Mining, both at the national level in pushing for legislation to ban mining in El Salvador, and at the local level, in giving educational trainings on the effects of mining, and organizing peaceful protests against the initiative.

The Salvadoran women's movement has grown stronger and louder. During the war, though women made up 40% of the guerrilla forces, little attention was paid to women's rights, and women suffered some of the most brutal and sexualized violence. Since the war more and more organizations have formed to educate around and demand women's rights, and work for opportunities for women's development. On the advocacy front, Las Dignas, Las Melidas, and SHARE partner ORMUSA have led the way, playing a crucial role in developing and pushing for key legislation. In November of 2010, the women's movement achieved a major victory, with the passage of the Holistic Law for a Life Free of Violence Against Women. On November 25, more than 4,000 women marched to demand the law, which was passed later in the day—the culmination of a long process of dialogue and advocacy. The law seeks to strengthen prevention, attention to, and sanctioning of violent crimes against women. The law creates a policy of attention to women in situations of violence, including the creation of follow-up teams and shelters for women. In a culture seeped in machismo and impunity, the creation of public policies that prevent and respond to violence against women is an inexpressibly important step in changing attitudes, behavior, and actions, and is an achievement that many fought hard to accomplish.



Civil society has also been extremely effective in responding to disaster situations, often picking up where the government has left off. After Hurricane Ida in 2009, the government and civil society have made a concentrated effort to develop and train civil protection teams. These teams in coordination with organizations like CRIPDES were able to provide immediate response to the three main tropical storms that hit during the 2010 rainy season, and to flooding caused by release of water from dams and from other constant downpours. SHARE strongly believes in the role that civil society plays in building a just future for El Salvador and beyond.

With this background, it is clear that despite the hardships and challenges, this is a period of much hope for El Salvador. We are united in a belief that a better El Salvador, indeed, a better world, is possible.

Additional Resources on El Salvador

SHARE website: www.share-elsalvador.org

SHARE blog: <http://www.share-elsalvador.org/category/blog>

SHARE Facebook: www.facebook.com/SHAREelsalvador

SHARE YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXkXVv4v-z3IFZ1bIwKd0Sg>

SHARE Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SHAREelsalvador>

The Voices on the Border blog: <https://voiceselsalvador.wordpress.com/>

Tim's El Salvador blog: <http://luterano.blogspot.com/>

Upside Down World: www.upsidedownworld.org

El Salvador on Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ElSalvador>

United Nations Development Report on El Salvador:
<http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/SLV.pdf>

The School of the Americas Watch: www.soaw.org

Committee of People in Solidarity with El Salvador (CISPES): www.cispes.org

El Salvador Sister Cities: www.elsalvadorsolidarity.org

Latin America Solidarity Coalition: www.lasolidarity.org